



2016 HLPF side event summary

ICTs as a catalyst for sustainable development – From inspiration to action and the Multi-Stakeholder engagement for implementation

Organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Global e-Sustainable Initiative (GeSI)

15 July 2016 in Conference Room #4

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Global e-Sustainable Initiative (GeSI) Organized a side event on 15 July entitled: *ICTs as a catalyst for sustainable development – from inspiration to action and the Multi-Stakeholder engagement for implementation*, in the margins of the 2016 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Panelists included: Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Chief, Strategic Planning and Membership of ITU; Christopher Lloyd, Vice-Chair GeSI Board- Executive Director, Public Policy Development and Corporate responsibility, Verizon; Jessica Long, Managing Director- Strategy & Sustainability, Accenture; Julia Burchell, Senior Manager, Insights, GSMA and Isabelle Mauro, Head of Telecommunications, World Economic Forum (WEF). They addressed an interactive dialogue in their field of expertise, the important role of ICTs and STI in accelerating the achievement of the 17 SDGs through effective partnership.

The panel was moderated by Gary Fowlie, Head, ITU Liaison Office to the United Nations who provided an overview of the catalytic role and the potential of ICTs as cross-cutting issues towards achieving all 17 SDGs. He stressed the importance of broadband and STI in the context of the 2030 development agenda then he addressed questions to the panelists that included the following: *Why are ICTs essential for the achievement of the SDGs to ensuring that no one is left behind? What are the main opportunities of ICTs to accelerate progress and maximizing the transformational change we need, as well as the challenges linked to access and connectivity for all?*

Doreen Bogdan-Martin made the keynote address focusing on bridging the digital divide, ICTs/broadband access and connectivity as a vital lever to help us achieve each and everyone of the 17 SDGs. She noted the need to prioritize ICT infrastructure investment and connectivity as an integral part of national sustainable development strategies. She underscored that less than half the world's population is still offline with no access to the wealth of information and knowledge available online: and that in the LDCs more than 90% of the population is offline. She referenced the need for general measures such as: to create an enabling regulatory environment between regulators and other stakeholders across the sectors and remove the barriers that hinder progress; supply-side measures for sharing telecoms infrastructure, promote competition to allow potential new operators to enter the market successfully and for demand-side measures to building awareness, trust and capabilities- through activities, good content and services- in fields such as health, education, administration, justice and e-commerce; and financing by prioritizing ICTs/broadband and STI.

GeSI's report: *#System Transformation and how digital solutions will drive progress towards the sustainable development goals*, focused on the key findings of their study. The issue of big data and data revolution for sustainable development was also raised.

GSMA noted the importance of mobile technologies to solve problems and the critical role of the mobile industry in ensuring positive impact for vulnerable communities through tailoring ICT tools and applications to them. WEF underlined the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the challenges to harness its full potential for sustainable development. Many other critical issues were raised that related to education, health, SMEs, mobile technologies, women and girls.

The need for multi-stakeholder engagement and cooperation was highlighted as essential in light of the existing barriers to ICT adoption. Joint action by policymakers, multilateral organizations and the ICT sector are required to connect the billions currently unconnected, and to deliver a range of life-enhancing and life-changing services at the required speed, scale and complexity of transformation needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The need to break down silos and work horizontally was stressed. Overall the event discussed the strategies and solutions with the private sector and other stakeholders for an inclusive society, in which everyone can benefit from the power of ICTs and STI, through access and internet connectivity by bringing the rest of the world online and ensuring that no one is left behind to achieve the SDGs for a better world.